

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /059 W
-----090056 310457Z /15
R 301632Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4959

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, AU
SUBJECT: LARGE GAINS FOR FREEDOM PARTY IN GRAZ

1. UNEXPECTEDLY LARGE GAINS BY THE SMALL FREEDOM PARTY (FPO) OF POPULAR MAYOR GOETZ IN THE JANUARY 29 GRAZ MUNICIPAL ELECTION HAVE UPSET THE PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP) PARTNERS IN THAT CITY'S COALITION GOVERNMENT AND ADDED TO CONCERN IN AUSTRIA'S SOCIALIST PARTY (SPO) THAT THE SOCIALIST POWER BASE IN URBAN AREAS IS BEING ERODED. THE FPO'S SHARE OF THE VOTE IN GRAZ INCREASED FROM 16.9 PERCENT IN 1973 TO 24.9 PERCENT; THAT OF THE SPO DECLINED FROM 44.2 TO 41.3 PERCENT, OF THE OVP FROM 35.5 TO 31.5 PERCENT, AND OF THE COMMUNISTS FROM 3.1 TO 2.0 PERCENT. BY AUSTRIAN STANDARDS, THIS WAS A LANDSLIDE.

2. THIS TOO-OBVIOUS POPULARITY OF MAYOR GOETZ COULD COST HIM HIS JOB. EVEN BEFORE THE ELECTION, SOME OVP LEADERS RESENTED "DOING THE JOB FOR GOETZ" AND WERE CALLING FOR END TO THE FPO-OVP COALITION IN GRAZ. AFTER THE ELECTION, SPO LEADERS IN GRAZ HAVE CALLED OPENLY FOR AN SPO-OVP COALITION. OVP LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY CHAGRINED BECAUSE THEY OFFERED THE MAYORALITY TO THE FPO, IN RETURN FOR A DOMINANT OVP ROLE IN PROGRAM FORMULATION,
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WHEN THE SPO LOST ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN GRAZ IN 1973. SOCIALIST CONCERN REFLECTS THE FACT THAT MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS IN GRAZ CONFIRM THE DECLINE IN SOCIALIST STRENGTH IN URBAN AREAS PREVIOUSLY EVIDENT IN INNSBRUCK, SALZBURG, KREMS, AND EISENSTADT, AND ALSO THE FACT THAT THE OVP IN VIENNA, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ITS MOST POPULAR PERSONALITY AND FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL, DR.

ERHARD BUSEK, IS TRYING TO MAKE A REAL CONTEST OF THE
VIENNA CITY ELECTIONS THAT MUST BE HELD THIS YEAR. ODDS
ARE, HOWEVER, THAT GOETZ WILL REMAIN AS MAYOR OF GRAZ
SINCE FAILURE TO RENEW THE FPO-OVP COALITION THERE COULD
PROPEL HIM INTO NATIONAL POLITICS WHERE HE COULD BE AN
EVEN GREATER THREAT TO EACH OF AUSTRIA'S TWO LARGE
PARTIES. WOLF

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENNA00853
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780045-0456
Format: TEL
From: VIENNA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978016/aaaaaevk.tel
Line Count: 69
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 129263e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3769275
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LARGE GAINS FOR FREEDOM PARTY IN GRAZ
TAGS: PINT, AU, OVP, FPO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/129263e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014